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INR/IAA (BEN-YEHUDA)
TREASURY FOR JEFFREY LEVINE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/11/2011

TAGS: PGOV PREL PINR HA

SUBJECT: PREVAL TO GET ORGANIZED SOON

REF: PAUP 1178

Classified By: Ambassador Janet Sanderson for reason 1.4(b).

¶1. (C) Presidential advisor Alix Fils-Aime on July 27 told Polcouns that President Preval would complete the organization of his staff after his return from Europe on July 6, naming a chief-of-staff and moving operations to the national palace. Preval would not replace government staff below the minister level in order to avoid wrangling with political parties over jobs. Pacification of gangs and (Fanmi Lavalas) FL militants remained a priority. Fils-Aime estimated that the government needed to target some sort of assistance program to 6,000-10,000 potential troublemakers. Preval's priorities on his return to Haiti would be consultation with political parties and civil society on constitutional reform, most notably the issue of dual nationality. Fils-Aime came to the Preval team only after Preval's victory, but has become a key staffer on political issues. He is a self-described "activist" with revolutionary credentials who also "loves the States." He is a relaxed and open interlocutor, but usually careful not to stray from the Preval line. End Summary.

When Preval Gets Back...

¶2. (C) Polcouns met Fils-Aime at the noticeably quiet presidential residence in Port-au-Prince -- President Preval departed for a trip to the United States and Europe on June 25 with a large delegation in tow and is scheduled to return on July 6. Fils-Aime insisted that the presidency remained busy, that criticism of government inaction was unfair, and that President Preval would settle on a "final" organization of his staff upon his return, including the designation of a chief-of-staff. He claimed not to know who that would be. Asked about members of the transition team who had not joined the cabinet, Alexis said that most, including Gabriel Varett, Fritz Longchamps, and Ericque Pierre, would "continue to help out," though he would not or could not describe their precise roles. Robert Manuel "obviously" would play an important role. The final move of staff to the national palace awaited completion of an audit. "They (the IGOH) stole a lot of stuff like valuable paintings" Alexis claimed. "The Prime Minister had four official cars sent to Florida,

including the Lexus he's driving now. You guys should get it back."

¶13. (C) Fils-Aime also raised Preval's worries about members of the Presidential Security Unit (PSU). "A lot of those guys are rotten and they have to be cleaned out first." He added that Alexis had already issued an order that anyone in the palace responsible for security had to be a uniformed member of the Haitian National Police (HNP). The government also wanted to establish a security unit responsible for all ministers and senior officials to clarify authority and responsibility of security forces across the government. Polcouns reiterated that the U.S. had already trained HNP officers for the PSU who were not employed at the palace and that we hoped to consult with presidential advisor Robert Manuel at the first opportunity.

Avoiding Trouble

¶14. (C) According to Fils-Aime, Preval planned to leave in place the bulk of public officials, including the directors general at the ministries (third in authority and usually in charge of personnel), and thus avoid another complicated round of negotiation with the political parties over jobs and patronage. Job seekers, including former FL partisans and in some cases violence-prone "chimeres" had appeared at ministries and government agencies demanding their old jobs and trying to intimidate officials. The Government's refusal to accommodate these hooligans and the PM's strong warnings that the government would not tolerate violence had led to a decrease in these incidents, though they remained a "bother" (reftel).

¶15. (C) Nevertheless, Fils-Aime warned that roughly 6,000 former government employees and FL partisans and another roughly 4,000 marginalized youth and gang members remained a threat to stability. The Preval government wanted to target this population directly with benefits and job training. Fils-Aime thanked the U.S. Embassy for contributing to a good start. (Note: the Ambassador had announced a new initiative for Cite Soleil on June 23. End Note.) Fils-Aime estimated that based on his initial calculations, the government would look for a total of \$25 million to implement their "social appeasement" program ("though I don't like that term") over a period of two years. Asked if this would not unduly favor lawless elements in poorer neighborhoods at the expense of law-abiding citizens, Fils-Aime replied that such a program was politically necessary, stressing that the estimated 10,000 had the potential to take up arms and destabilize the country.

Dual Nationality a Priority

¶16. (C) Asked about Preval's priorities, Fils-Aime said Preval would resume his outreach to political parties and civil society after his return from Europe and propose constitutional reform. Preval wanted to address dual nationality, currently prohibited under the Haitian constitution. Haiti had to better utilize the talent and resources of its diaspora and attract some of those people home.

Bio Info

¶17. (C) Fils-Aime was born in 1949 or 1950 (he is 56 years-old) in Haiti to a Haitian father and American mother (Consular records indicate he has never held a U.S. passport.) He attended high school in Brooklyn, "where I learned more Spanish than English." He returned to Haiti and became active in communist politics. He spent time in Grenada working with Prime Minister Maurice Bishop and in Nicaragua during the Sandinista regime in the agrarian sector. The regime of Jean-Claude Duvalier imprisoned him in solitary confinement for 18 months in the early 1980's for his communist ties ("but they got me for the wrong reasons, I

was into things they didn't know about") The Duvalier regime freed Fils-Aime as a result of negotiations with Former President Carter and Andrew Young. Fils-Aime claims that he traveled to Libya in 1986 seeking Muamar Qaddafi's assistance in overthrowing Jean-Claude Duvalier: Duvalier's flight from Haiti on February 7 made the question moot. Fils-Aime comfortably volunteered all of the above information, adding "you must know all this since it's in my file." "But I learned from all these experiences and I love New York and the States."

¶8. (C) Fils-Aime won election to the chamber of deputies in 1985 as an independent candidate from Kenscoff and Petionville, upper-class suburbs of Port-au-Prince. He won a reputation as an astute, hard-working, and honest politician who tried to work within system but stayed clear of FL excesses. Fils-Aime joined Preval's team only after Preval's first-round victory in February, but quickly gained significant responsibility for outreach to political parties and the private sector. He worked closely with Joseph Jasmin, who became minister for parliamentary relations. Fils-Aime is openly disdainful of Rene Momplaisir, and bristled at the notion that they are colleagues.

Comment

¶9. (C) Fils-Aime has been an approachable and open interlocutor with Polcouns since joining the Preval team. His first instinct on most issues is to defend Preval: "It's normal to take some time to set up your staff, look how long it takes an American President." On a few questions, notably the issue of criminals in government and Senate President Joseph Lambert, he has gone beyond Preval's line and expressed strong feelings. He again took the U.S. to task for not acting against Lambert: "You guys have CIA, DIA, DEA, and FBI down here, how come you never arrested him?" These and other comments (such as his assumption we have a detailed file on him) illustrate that he does not have a completely accurate view of our capacity or influence in Haiti, but he has been open to discussion and clarification of our role. Fils-Aime does not have the long-term personal relationship with Preval that others in the inner circle enjoy, but he has gained important responsibilities since coming on board. We expect that he will remain a valuable contact worth cultivating.

SANDERSON